TRINITY BLOOD

VIZ SELECT

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ORIGINAL STORY BY RYO HOSHINO
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NOW A HIT ANIME!

A LONG TIME AGO DURING THE "GREAT WAR," MAN THINGS WERE DESTROYED

LAND, KNOWLEDGE AND THE ECOSYSTEM-- ALL WERE COMPLETELY CHANGED OR LOST.

"THE OUTLANDS" IS A DESERT THAT IS NO LONGER CIVILIZED. IT IS A STRANGE WORLD WHERE DANGEROUS CREATURES PROWL.

THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR ABILITY TO SURVIVE IN SUCH A WILD AND UNFRIENDLY PLACE.

AMONG THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE OUTLAND IS A GOOD AND HONEST GIRL.

THE THIRD

Apprentice Girl on the Desert Planet

THE THIRD™

VOL.1

WORK 01
[Girls be Ambitious]

THE THIRD
Apprentice Girl on the Desert Planet

A long time ago, there was a large destruction called the "Great War."

Most of the world is covered with sand.

In the world where the human race greatly decreased the living space,

there was one girl who lived strongly in a severe desert.

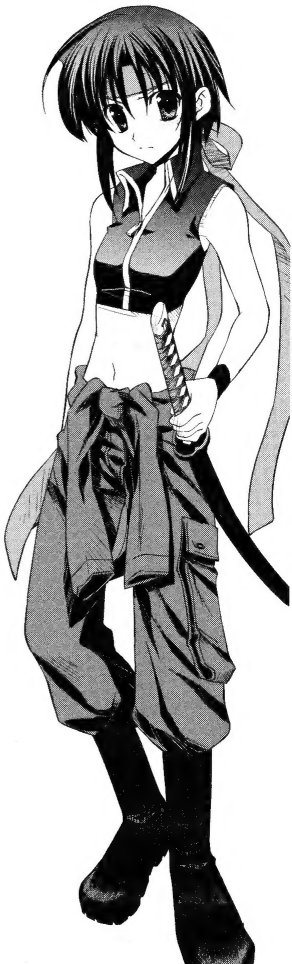
Her name is Honoka.

She will be called the "Sword Dancer" in the future.

She is a person that will come to be regarded as

a first class "Dune Runner."

This is a story of the apprentice period of her life.



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THE THIRD™

VOLUME 1

Story by
Ryo Hoshino

Art by
Ariko Ito

Original Character Design by
Nao Goto

THE THIRD

Apprentice Girl on the Desert Planet

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HONOKA!
MMMPH
DON'T BRING THAT UNHAPPY FACE INTO MY RESTAURANT.
H...
MY GOODNESS...
...THE WEATHER IS DEPRESSING ENOUGH AS IT IS.

I LIKE THIS TOWN, BUT...
...I HATE GOING OUTSIDE DURING A DESERT SANDSTORM.
COMPLAIN TO THE THIRD, NOT TO ME!
HMPH. NONE OF THEM CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE OUTLANDS.
"THE THIRD" IS WHAT THE COMMON PEOPLE CALL THE ONES WHO REIGN--THE DESCENDANTS OF THOSE WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR SAVING THE HUMAN RACE FROM DESTRUCTION.
THEY ARE THE ELITE, A SMALL RULING CLASS THAT INHERITED ALL OF THE TECHNOLOGY THE WORLD KNEW BEFORE THE GREAT WAR.
THE THIRD DO NOT BOTHER ABOUT THE LIVES OF THE COMMON PEOPLE, OR ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE. THEY ARE INTERESTED ONLY IN THE OLD TECHNOLOGY.
THAT'S TRUE.
STILL, IT IS ONLY BECAUSE OF THEM THAT WE ARE NOT STARVING TO DEATH.

THE INTENSE HEAT IS NOT THE ONLY DANGER IN THE DESERT.
BECAUSE OF THE MANY DANGERS THE OUTLANDS CONTAIN, THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE INSURE THEIR OWN SAFETY BY HIRING PROFESSIONAL "DUNE RUNNERS," EXPERTS IN DESERT TRAVEL.
THE BEST OF THE DUNE RUNNERS ARE RENOWNED ALL THROUGH THE OUTLANDS. THEY ARE THOUGHT OF AS HEROES AND ARE TREATED THAT WAY, TOO.
IN THE OUTLANDS, THERE IS AN OUTLAND WAY OF LIVING.
BECAUSE OF THAT, WE DUNE RUNNERS EXIST.
MY CONFIDENCE COMES FROM THE FACT THAT I AM SO STRONG AS TO BE UNBEATABLE!
I AM SO STRONG, I EVEN SURP-RISE MY-SELF!

GIVEN THE RIGHT MISSION, I CAN SHOW HOW SKILLED I REALLY AM.
ALL I NEED IS A CHANCE TO PROVE MYSELF.
SOMEDAY I'LL BE THE BEST!
YES, YES.
MY GOODNESS-- YOU'RE ALREADY THE BEST AT BOASTING.
I HAVE THE SKILLS, TOO!
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH ...
...I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE I COULD DO WITH MY LIFE.
I WAS TAKEN IN BY A CARAVAN WHEN I WAS A BABY. IT WAS A ROWDY GROUP...
...AND FULL OF PEOPLE WHO KNEW THEIR WAY AROUND THE DESERT.
BECAUSE NO ONE COULD MOVE AS SILENTLY AND SWIFTLY AS MY GRANDFATHER, HE WAS CALLED THE GHOST WALKER. HE TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT DESERT SURVIVAL.

YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED WITH YOUR CARAVAN.
I'M ALREADY 15--A PROPER ADULT.
AND MY DESERT SURVIVAL SKILLS ARE SECOND-TO-NONE IN THE CARAVAN.
BUT YOU STILL BOAST LIKE A CHILD.
SO...
...HOW IS EVERYTHING GOING FOR THE FIRST-CLASS DUNE RUNNER AT THE MOMENT?

YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A CAT, RIGHT?
DID YOU FIND IT?
DON'T ASK.
Actually, I had forgotten all about it.

THE SEARCH WAS GOING WELL UNTIL I ACTUALLY FOUND THE LOST CAT, MII-CHAN.

I NOT ONLY ALLOWED IT TO ESCAPE AFTER GETTING CLOSE TO IT...

...BUT I FELL FROM THE TREE AND KNOCKED MYSELF OUT.

SO...

...WHAT DID YOUR *PARTNER* SAY?

JEEZ. HOW *EMBAR-RASSING!*

I THOUGHT FINDING A CAT WAS A JOB I'D BE ABLE TO FINISH BEFORE BREAKFAST!

LUCKILY, HE'S STILL IN THE HOSPITAL.

I can't tell him.

IN THE HOS-PITAL, HUH?
INSTEAD OF WORRYING ABOUT OTHERS...
...SHOULDN'T YOU BE WORRYING ABOUT THE FACT THAT YOU HAVEN'T HAD A SINGLE CUSTOMER IN ALL THE TIME I'VE BEEN IN HERE?
MY REGULARS ARE A BIT BUSY RIGHT NOW.
THEY'RE ALWAYS OUT AND ABOUT DURING THE AFTERNOON.
NO THANKS TO YOU.

I'M A DUNE RUNNER, TOO...
...BUT I ALWAYS GET STUCK WITH THESE CRUMMY JOBS.

IF YOU CALL THEM "THESE CRUMMY JOBS," YOU STILL HAVE A LOT TO LEARN.
NO ONE STARTS HER CAREER AS A BODY-GUARD OR COURIER.
YOU'LL UNDERSTAND BETTER AS YOU GAIN EXPERIENCE, HONOKA.
I CAN ALREADY TAKE CARE OF MYSELF!
OH, MY. THAT'S RIGHT. I'M SORRY.
I HATE IT WHEN YOU TALK TO ME AS IF I WERE A KID!
JEEZ!
STOP IT!

...THAT I'M STILL AN AMATEUR WHO CAN'T EVEN CATCH A CAT.
I ALREADY KNOW...
There you go again!
ARGH! JEEZ!
IT'S WONDERFUL TO BE YOUNG.
I'm jealous.
IT'S FINE TO COMPLAIN, BUT--
LOOK.

H-
HELLO.

IT SEEMS AS IF YOUR CUTE LITTLE CLIENT HAS COME TO CHECK UP ON YOU.

I GOT A TAIL ON HIM!
Literally.
T-TAIL!

...UM...
MMMM...
EH...

BIG SIS-TER ...
...HAVE YOU FOUND MII-CHAN?

I KNOW!

...YOU'RE A FAILURE AS A DUNE RUNNER.

IF YOU FAIL YOUR CLIENT ...

I GIVE YOU MY WORD AS THE DUNE RUNNER HONOKA.

BIG SISTER WILL FIND HIM RIGHT AWAY.

DON'T WORRY. IT'S ALL RIGHT.

LEAVE IT TO ME!

REALLY? YOU PROMISE?

PU'LL

YOU'LL LEARN AS YOU GET MORE EXPERIENCE.

...I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT TO DO.

EVEN THOUGH I SAY THINGS LIKE THAT ...

ACK!

...THAT THOSE ARE THE ONLY KINDS OF REQUESTS THAT WOULD COME TO AN AMATEUR LIKE ME.

THIS TOWN ISN'T SO NAIVE AS TO DO OTHERWISE.

NO ONE KNOWS BETTER THAN I...

ARGH--JEEZ!
QUIT BROODING ABOUT IT!
THE CAT!
NOTHING TO DO BUT LOOK FOR IT!
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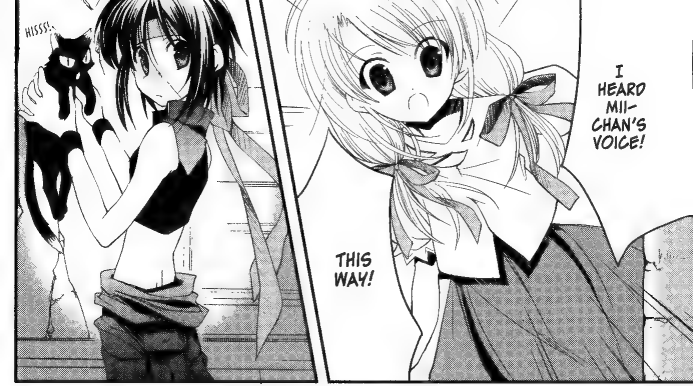
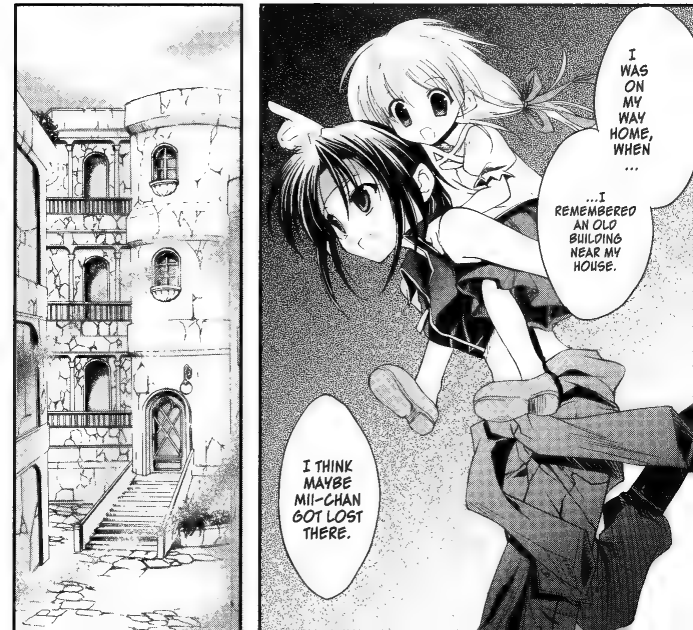
OH!
BIG SISTER!


HISSS!
I HEARD MII-CHAN'S VOICE!
THIS WAY!


I WAS ON MY WAY HOME, WHEN ...
...I REMEMBERED AN OLD BUILDING NEAR MY HOUSE.
I THINK MAYBE MII-CHAN GOT LOST THERE.

Meo?...
I WONDER IF WE CAN GET THROUGH, TOO?
Whoa?
MAYBE IT GOT IN THROUGH THIS HOLE.
IT'S MII-CHAN CRYING!
HIS VOICE!
HUH?
THIS!
SHIT!
YOW!
WAIT!
WAI--!
OW!

KA-CHAK
IT'S TOO DIFFICULT!
WHEW...
I HOPE NO ONE SAW THAT!

JEEZ! I'M TAKING ALL THIS TROUBLE OVER A CAT.
!
UWAH!
WAIT!
"REALLY? YOU PROMISE?"
"IF YOU CALL THEM 'THESE CRUMMY JOBS' YOU STILL HAVE A LOT TO LEARN."
NGH!
WHAT A DOPE I AM!

TO THAT GIRL, HER CAT IS...

...MORE IMPORTANT THAN HERSELF!

JUST A BIT MORE ...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ?!

GET DOWN!

--YOU!

WATCH OUT!

IT'S SO HIGH... YOU COULDN'T CLIMB DOWN, HUH?

DON'T BE AFRAID.

COME ON.

I HAVE--

GIVE ME YOUR ARM!
I SQUINT
I CAN'T REACH!
I PROMISED HER THAT I WOULD FIND THE CAT...
JEEZ!
...NO MATTER WHAT!

D-DON'T BE AFRAID!
I'M HERE, SO...
...EVERY-THING'S GOING TO BE OKAY!

HA HA... HA.
AT THIS RATE...
...THE KID DOESN'T REALLY NEED ME.
.....
MII-CHAN, THANK GOOD-NESS...
...THAT YOU'RE SAFE.
DON'T RUN AWAY AGAIN, OKAY?
HUFF
I'M EX-HAUST-ED.
HAH-
NGH.

JEEZ...

SHE'S MUCH...

...STRONGER THAN I AM.

THERE IS MORE TO LIFE...
...THAN PRIDE AND BOASTING.

NO.

I DIDN'T DO ANY-THING.

BIG SISTER!

THANK YOU!

YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO REALLY LISTENED, BIG SISTER.

NO ONE ELSE WOULD TAKE MY PROBLEM SERIOUSLY.

MII-CHAN MUST REALLY BE IMPORTANT TO YOU.

THE ONLY REASON WE FOUND HIM WAS BECAUSE YOU SEARCHED SO HARD.

YEP!

UM...
THIS...
ごそ、
?

THEN, LET'S GO BACK.
OH! WAIT...

OH, THOSE COOKIES LOOK DELICIOUS.

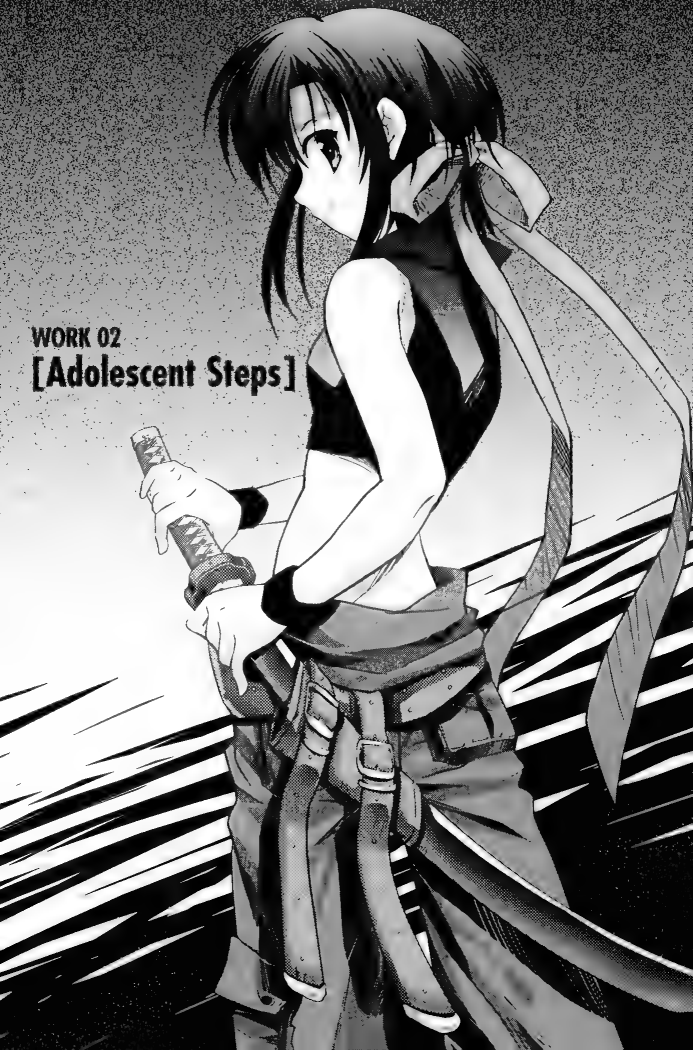
HEH HEH. THEY'RE REALLY GOOD.

THE SANDSTORM HAS DIED DOWN AND THE SKY IS BLUE AGAIN.

IT LOOKS AS IF THE WEATHER WILL GET HOTTER NOW.

AFTER ALL, THEY ARE...

...A PROPER REWARD FOR A JOB WELL DONE!


WORK 02
[Adolescent Steps]

CENTURIES AFTER THE GREAT WAR DESTROYED CIVILIZATION AND TURNED MUCH OF THE WORLD TO DESERT...

...HUMANS CONTINUE TO THRIVE IN THIS HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT.

YOU'RE SO NOISY, HONOKA. FIRST TIME IN THE DESERT?

I ADVISE YOU NOT TO DRINK YOUR WATER ALL AT ONCE. YOU DON'T WANT TO RUN OUT BEFORE WE FIND MORE.

KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN.

YOU'LL USE UP ALL YOUR ENERGY.

OLD ASS-HOLE ...

I KNOW!

You don't need to remind me of every little rule!

IT'S SO HOT ...

IN A PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS PART OF THE OUTLAND, CALLED THE ROKUGOU DESERT LIVES AN EXPERT ON DESERT SURVIVAL...

...A GIRL WHO IS A PROFES-SIONAL DUNE RUNNER.

TRY NOT TO ADVERTISE YOUR IGNORANCE, OKAY?

JEEZ, I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD OF ANYONE TRYING TO GET ACROSS THE OUTLANDS ON FOOT.

We'll be mistaken for two people with a death wish.

ALL I'M SAYING IS THAT *YOU* LACK *COMMON SENSE!*

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HAH!

WALKING CAN'T BE HELPED. A DUNE BUGGY WON'T RUN IN THIS REGION BECAUSE OF ALL THE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC NOISE.

ON TOP OF THAT, THERE ARE POOLS OF QUICKSAND EVERYWHERE.

PAY ATTENTION TO WHERE YOU'RE WALKING. DON'T STEP INTO ONE.

YOU'LL BE SUCKED INTO IT.

OUR JOB IS STILL EASY.

ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS MARK THOSE QUICKSAND AREAS.

THERE-FORE...

...THE ONLY THING I HAVE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT IS THAT MY PARTNER IS NOT SEXY ENOUGH TO BE CALLED A DATE.

~small

!!

OH, BE QUIET!

WHY AM I OUT HERE *ALL ALONE* WITH THIS *ANCIENT SEX MANIAC*?!

ずかっ

ずかっ

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MAYBE IT'S AN EASY JOB, BUT IT'S ALSO MY FIRST REAL JOB AS A DUNE RUNNER.

WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO WHEN YOU CAME OUT OF NO-WHERE AND OFFERED ME A PARTNER-SHIP?!

Hey! Don't run on ahead!

AS LONG AS I'M GOING TO ALL THIS TROUBLE, I SHOULD HAVE SIGNED UP A LADY WITH CURVES.

JUST MY LUCK TO END UP WITH SUCH A SCRAWNY LITTLE CHICK.

!!

YOU DIRTY OLD MAN, COME OVER HERE AND SAY THAT!

HM? ARE YOU UPSET BY YOUR SCRAWNY BODY?
OR WAS IT THAT I CALLED YOU A LITTLE CHICK THAT HIT A NERVE?
WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A DUNE RUNNER?
MAYBE YOU WERE DISTURBED BY SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.
I WAS RAISED IN THE DESERT.
IT'S NOTHING SPECIAL...
Damn!
DON'T YOU KNOW THE FIRST RULE OF THE OUTLANDS? "DON'T GET INVOLVED IN OTHER PEOPLE'S PERSONAL PROBLEMS."
OR ARE YOU JUST ITCHING TO GIVE ME A PIECE OF YOUR MIND?
.....

I KNOW HOW DANGEROUS THE DESERT CAN BE, AND--
YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
DID YOU MEAN TO CLAIM SOME THING LIKE THAT?
!
YOU WANT TO BECOME A DUNE RUNNER WHO KNOWS EVERYTHING.
OF COURSE, THERE ARE ENOUGH DANGERS TO GO AROUND.

TOO BAD.
THAT ISN'T THE ANSWER I WANTED.

DON'T TALK DOWN TO ME, YOU DIRTY OLD MAN!

HMPH!

WHAT A SORRY EXCUSE FOR A GIRL YOU ARE.

I JUST WISH HE WASN'T SO SURE OF HIS OPINION.

I CAN'T HELP THE WAY I LOOK. NO WONDER HE THINKS OF ME AS AN AMATEUR.

I KNOW I'M A LITTLE SHORTER THAN AVERAGE.

AND THEN... MY CHEST... IS PRETTY... ER...

...it makes me feel as if I'm all hunched over.

WHY DON'T YOU GO HOME AND SIP SOME TEA?!

I CAN DO THIS JOB *WITH-OUT* YOUR HELP.

I KNOW --!

THE ONLY WAY TO GET EXPERIENCE IS TO GO OUT AND GET IT.

I MUST SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE ALL MY ASSIGNMENTS.

YOU TALK TOO MUCH!

THE QUICKSAND POOLS ARE OBVIOUS.

HEY, WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

IF YOU STEP INTO ONE, YOU'LL GET *SUCKED IN!*

BLURP...

DAMN!
STUPID ...
!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! GIVE ME YOUR HAND, QUICKLY!

SHIT!
AT A TIME LIKE THIS...
UGH!!

BLURP...
SORRY.
HUFF
HUFF
JEEZ.
LOOKS LIKE YOUR CHEST ISN'T THE ONLY THING AROUND HERE THAT'S DEFICIENT.
DAMN.
OLD MAN!
YOUR LEG?
NO USE.
I LOST MY FIRST AID KIT ALONG WITH MY COAT.
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
I DROPPED MY WATER, TOO.
!
WE SHOULD GO BACK TO BASE CAMP AND BROADCAST AN SOS.

IF YOU WALK AT A NORMAL CLIP, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET BACK HERE BEFORE NIGHTFALL.

TAKE MINE.

WHAT ARE YOU SAY-ING?

IN ANY CASE, WE HAVE JUST ENOUGH WATER FOR ONE PERSON TO GET BACK TO BASE CAMP. EVEN IF YOU RUSHED BACK TO ME...

...YOU WOULD BE TOO LATE TO SAVE ME. I'LL HAVE EITHER BEEN EATEN OR HAVE DIED OF THIRST.

YOU NEVER STRUCK ME AS A QUITTER.

THE TIME HAS COME TO BE REALISTIC ABOUT WHO LIVES AND WHO DIES.

IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THE ONE WHO SHOULD LIVE IS THE KID WITH HER WHOLE LIFE BEFORE HER.

LUCKILY, YOU HAVE ***SOME*** KNOWLEDGE OF THE DESERT.

I'M NOT A KID!
AND YOU CAN'T MAKE ME LEAVE YOU HERE TO DIE!
THEN I'LL USE DIFFERENT WORDS TO SUGGEST WHAT YOU SHOULD DO...
I'LL BE WAITING HERE PATIENTLY WHILE YOU HURRY TO GET SOME HELP.
YOU MUST THINK I'M VERY STUPID.
THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY.
HONOKA.
DO YOU HAVE A BOYFRIEND?
...HMM?
THIS IS HARDLY THE TIME FOR THAT SORT OF QUESTION!
TH-
HMPH.
THEN, YOU HAVE--N'T--
WAAAAH!!
IF YOU FINISH THAT SENTENCE, I'LL KILL YOU WHERE YOU SIT!

THIS IS WHY I HATE KIDS.
YOU ARE SUCH A PAIN.
ALL RIGHT THEN, WHAT ABOUT THIS?
FOR THE GOOD OF THE RACE WE MUST FAVOR THOSE WITH A BETTER CHANCE OF REPRODUCING.
DON'T MAKE WEIRD EXCUSES LIKE THAT!
You perverted old man.
ONE OF MY EYES IS ALMOST COMPLETELY BLIND.
むっ
AGAIN...
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BOTHER TO LIE TO ME, YOU CAN DO ME THE COURTESY OF MAKING YOUR LIES BELIEVABLE.
I'M TELLING THE TRUTH. AN OLD INJURY OF MINE HAS GOTTEN WORSE AS I'VE AGED.
IF I CAN SEE WELL THROUGH ONLY ONE EYE...
...I WON'T BE ABLE TO ESTIMATE DISTANCES CORRECTLY.
THAT'S REASON ENOUGH FOR ME TO LOSE MY LIFE IN THE DESERT.
HEY!

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!

YOU THINK THEY MADE US A TEAM SO YOU COULD LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT DESERT SURVIVAL FROM AN OLD DESERT RAT.

BUT ACTUALLY, THE MADE US A TEAM FOR ***MY BENEFIT.***

THE ONE WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO WATCH OVER A USELESS OLD MAN...

...WAS YOU.

WELL, IN ANY CASE...

...I WAS GOING TO RETIRE AFTER THIS JOB.

SURVIVING AS A DUNE RUNNER USING THE FEW TRICKS I'VE PICKED UP IN MY LIFE...

...ISN'T EASY.

I'M OLDER AND I MAY SOUND WISER, BUT...

...I'M THE SAME AS YOU.

THIS IS HOW YOU END UP IF YOU ACT WITHOUT THINKING.

I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING EXCEPT THE DESERT.

YOU UNDER-STAND NOW, DON'T YOU?

IF YOU'RE LUCKY, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE IT OUT OF THE DESERT.

I STAY BEHIND AND YOU GO.

THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUS.

WHAT?

...YOU...

...I SAID THAT THE STUPID ONE IS YOU!
YOU ASK YOURSELF QUESTIONS AND THEN YOU ANSWER YOURSELF. YOU CALL THAT EXPERIENCE?
YOU STILL HAVE ENOUGH ENERGY TO GIVE STUPID LECTURES!
TO JUST GIVE UP LIKE THIS...
THAT'S NOT EXPERIENCE--- THAT'S CRAP!
I WON'T ACCEPT IT!

HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LISTEN TO AN OLD MAN'S ADVICE, YOU KNOW.
AND IT'S NOT LIKE WE'LL BE SAVED, EVEN IF WE GET TO THE OASIS.
WE'D STILL HAVE TO MAKE IT TO A TOWN OR BE FOUND BY SOME-ONE--
SHUT UP!
HAVE FAITH IN THE KIDS WHO CAN DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.
I DON'T LIKE...
...LEAVING BEHIND SOMEONE WHO IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.

Hmph!

IF SAVING A COMRADE IS THE ACT OF AN AMATEUR...

.....

YOU REMIND ME OF WHY I HATE KIDS.

...THEN I'D RATHER NOT BE A PROFESSIONAL DUNE RUNNER!

IT HURTS TO EVEN BREATHE.
MY EYES... EVERY-THING'S GETTING BLURRY.
THE STARS... THEY LOOK AS IF THEY'VE FALLEN TO EARTH!
NO, NOT STARS...
HUH?

THOSE ARE THE LIGHTS OF A CARAVAN!
WE'RE SAVED?
LOOKS LIKE IT.
WELL, WELL. IT REALLY LOOKS AS IF IT'S HIGH TIME FOR ME TO QUIT.
HUH?
NOTHING. JUST TALKING TO MYSELF.
YOU KNOW ...
...I BELIEVE I UNDERSTAND A LITTLE MORE NOW.
I WAS THINKING ABOUT IT THE WHOLE TIME WE WERE OUT IN THE DESERT--
--ABOUT THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION...
WHY DID I BECOME A DUNE RUNNER?

I LIKE THIS DESERT A LOT.

THE DESERT WAITS AND WATCHES... JUST LIKE THE STARS.

IF YOU SURVIVE ITS DANGERS, IT CONFIRMS YOUR DECISION TO LIVE THERE WAS CORRECT.

THIS LAND, WHERE SAND STRETCHES IN ALL DIREC-TIONS AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE...

...TREATS ALL WHO LIVE IN IT THE SAME.

WELL...

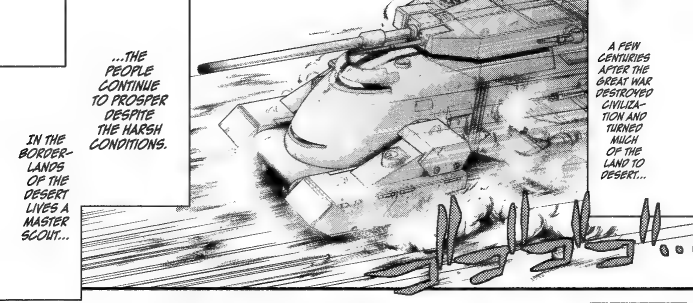
...THE CARAVAN ISN'T FAR.

...IF YOU CAN SPEAK SUCH BASIC TRUTHS, I'M IMPRESSED.
HMPH. LIKING AND DISLIKING...
ONLY A KID LIKE YOU WOULD MAKE SUCH A BIG DECISION BASED ON HOW SHE FEELS. BUT...

I PASS?

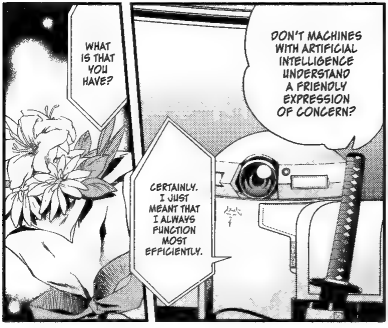
YUCK! I'D RATHER NOT PASS IF I DID IT BECAUSE I'M JUST LIKE HOW YOU WERE!
YOU REMIND ME OF MYSELF WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE.
YOU PASS.

WORK 03
[Sharp Edge, Round Moon]


A FEW CENTURIES AFTER THE GREAT WAR DESTROYED CIVILIZATION AND TURNED MUCH OF THE LAND TO DESERT...
...THE PEOPLE CONTINUE TO PROSPER DESPITE THE HARSH CONDITIONS.
IN THE BORDERLANDS OF THE DESERT LIVES A MASTER SCOUT...

BOGIE, HOW'S YOUR BODY DOING?
THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS.

...A PROFESSIONAL DUNE RUNNER.
SHE IS A GIRL WITH A GIRL'S CONCERNS.

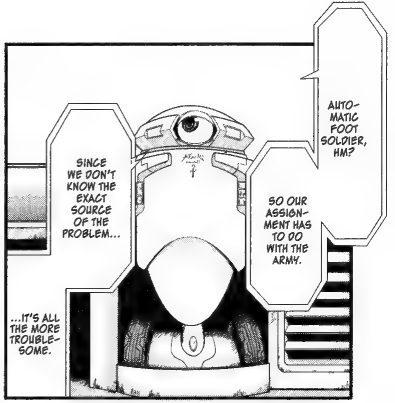

WHAT IS THAT YOU HAVE?
DON'T MACHINES WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE UNDERSTAND A FRIENDLY EXPRESSION OF CONCERN?
CERTAINLY. I JUST MEANT THAT I ALWAYS FUNCTION MOST EFFICIENTLY.

IN THE FUTURE, YOU'D BE BETTER OFF CHOOSING FLOWERS THAT CAN SURVIVE IN THIS HOT SANDY ENVIRONMENT.
DESERT FLOWERS ARE TOUGH. THEY TAKE THEIR MOISTURE DIRECTLY FROM THE AIR AND CLING TO LIFE.
You missed the point!
I hoped you would be impressed by my selfish thought-fulness.
ISN'T IT PRETTY? I WAS THINKING OF GIVING IT TO YOU TO CELEBRATE YOUR...
...DISCHARGE FROM THE SHOP!
THOSE TOWN-GROWN FLOWERS WILL SOON DIE OUT HERE.
LIKE THE FLOWERS, IF A PERSON DOES NOT HAVE A STRONG WILL TO LIVE, HER OR SHE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SURVIVE IN THIS LAND.
EACH HAS A DIFFERENT TALENT FOR LIVING.
THERE IS A REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FLOWERS THAT ARE COODLED AND FLOWERS THAT SURVIVE ON THEIR OWN.
YOUR EMOTIONAL RESPONSE IS UNFORTUNATE.
THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST IS A LAW OF NATURE.
...I DON'T LIKE IT.
I UNDERSTAND, BUT THE WAY YOU EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT...
IS THAT TRUE EVEN THOUGH THESE CULTIVATED PLANTS AND THE PLANTS THAT GROW BY THEMSELVES IN THE DESERT COME FROM THE SAME ANCIENT STOCK?

YOU TALK TOO MUCH!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
IT'S NOT THAT I'M CALLING YOU A WEED.
...BY AN OLD MAN I HELPED OUT OF A SCRAPE.
I WAS INTRO-DUCED TO IT...
HOW DID YOU LEARN OF IT?
THE PROBLEM WE'RE ASSIGNED TO TAKE CARE OF IS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN.
VERY WELL. LET US DISCUSS SOMETHING THAT IS MORE IMPORTANT. LET US DISCUSS OUR CURRENT ASSIGNMENT.
THREE DAYS AGO IN EM-PORIUM TOWN
I KNOW OF A BIG JOB.
I DON'T LIKE OWING YOU A FAVOR.
BUT YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DECIDE WHETHER YOU WANT TO TAKE ON THE JOB OR NOT, HONOKA.

AUTO-MATIC FOOT SOLDIER, EH?
THE CITY GOVERNMENT MANAGED TO CORNER THE ROBOT IN AN AREA THAT IS STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION, BUT THEIR TROUBLES ARE NOT OVER.
IT SEEMS THAT AN EXPERIMENTAL MODEL OF AN AUTOMATIC FOOT SOLDIER WENT BERSERK.
THE PLACE WHERE IT HAPPENED IS CALLED DOWN SIX. IT'S NOT FAR FROM HERE.
BECAUSE OF THE EFFORTS OF THE THIRD TO KEEP THE TOWNS IN LINE, THE ARMY OF AUTOMATIC FOOT SOLDIERS HAS MET A LOT OF RESISTANCE.
...CREATED THE AUTOMATIC FOOT SOLDIER TO HELP THEM CONTROL THE COMMON PEOPLE, WHO ARE IN THE MAJORITY.
THE SMALL ELITE GROUP THAT CONTROLS THIS LAND, THE THIRD...
WELL, WHATEVER THE TECHNICAL PROBLEM IS, OUR ASSIGNMENT REMAINS THE SAME.
APPARENTLY, THEIR SELF-PRESERVATION MODULE NEEDS ADJUSTING--OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
...THE PROBLEM WITH THE ROBOT FOOT SOLDIERS ISN'T HOW THEY LOOK...
I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS, BUT...

THE OLD MAN SAID HE WAS ASSIGNED THE JOB BY A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT WHO KEPT HIS IDENTITY A SECRET.
IT SEEMS THAT YOU WILL NEED TO REPAIR THE ROBOT AS WELL AS PROTECT THE PEOPLE.


AUTO-MATIC FOOT SOLDIER, HM?
SO OUR ASSIGN-MENT HAS TO DO WITH THE ARMY.
SINCE WE DON'T KNOW THE EXACT SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM...
...IT'S ALL THE MORE TROUBLE-SOME.

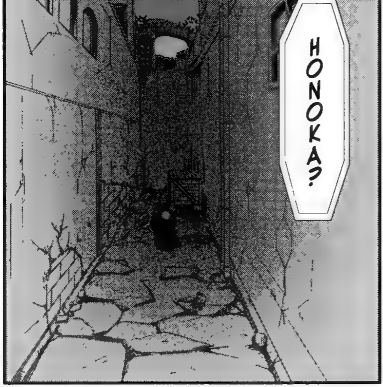
TO PUT IT SIMPLY, WE'VE TAKEN ON ONE SCARY JOB.

WELL, SINCE THE ASSIGNMENT IS UNDERCOVER, THERE IS OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING ABOUT IT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WISHES TO KEEP FROM THE GENERAL POPULATION.
TO PUT IT SIMPLY, WE JUST HAVE TO STOP THE ROBOT BEFORE IT HURTS ANYBODY, RIGHT?

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT THE JOB PAYS A LOT, AND...
WELL, THERE'S NO POINT GETTING YOUR CIRCUITS IN AN UPROAR ABOUT IT.

...IN ORDER TO BECOME A FIRST-CLASS DUNE RUNNER...
...I HAVE TO GET SOME FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE!
Or something like that.
CERTAINLY, YOUR EXCUSES ARE FIRST-CLASS.
YOU ONLY ACCEPTED THE JOB BECAUSE OF THE MONEY.
THE BILL FOR YOUR TIME IN THE SHOP IS INCLUDED IN THIS JOB, TOO!
Don't act as if you're not benefitting from this!
MY MAINTENANCE IS A TOP PRIORITY.
THOUGH I MUST ADMIT THERE IS SOME TRUTH IN WHAT YOU SAY.
WE'LL BE ABLE TO PICK OUR JOBS ONCE WE BECOME PROFESSIONAL DUNE RUNNERS, RIGHT?
EXACTLY.

DOWS 6, THE NEW CITY
I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...
WHAT'S WRONG?
HMM. IT'S PROBABLY NOTHING
I GUESS WE SHOULD SPLIT UP, AND EACH SEARCH HALF THE CITY...


HONOKA?

TO BE SO FORGETFUL--- YOU MUST HAVE A SERIOUS DEFECT IN YOUR MEMORY BANKS.
GRAB

HEY, BOGIE ...
...THE THING WE'RE AFTER IS A ROBOT FOOT SOLDIER, RIGHT?

?!

HONOKA!!

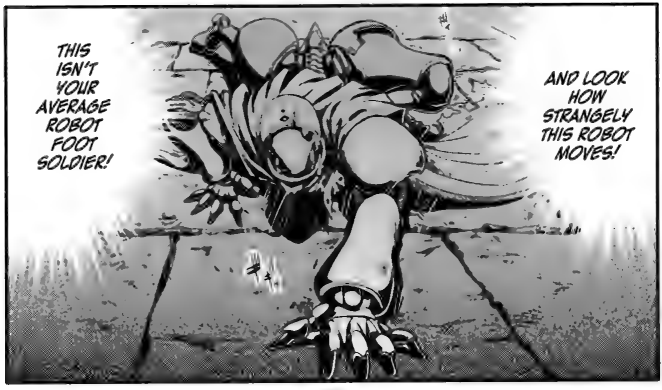
WHOA!

Hmph!

CHAK

?!

I CAN'T DRAW MY SWORD!


THIS ISN'T YOUR AVERAGE ROBOT FOOT SOLDIER!
AND LOOK HOW STRANGELY THIS ROBOT MOVES!

KEEP YOUR COOL, AND...
...STUDY YOUR OPPONENT!
TAKE IT EASY!
!!
?!

I don't want to die.
OWW...
IT CAN'T BE... THIS IS--!
HONOKA!
CRUNCH!

IF I ARRIVED A MOMENT LATER...
FZZT
...YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED!
WHAT'S WRONG?
THAT ROBOT...
...IT WAS YELLING.
YELLING? IT CAN'T BE...
NO, THAT'S NOT OUT OF THE QUESTION.

THAT MACHINE ISN'T DESIGNED TO CRY OUT.
SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR SELF-PRESERVATION MODULE...
...IT NEEDS ADJUSTING--OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
IT MIGHT BE FORCED TO ACT IN THIS STRANGE WAY BY THE ACCIDENTAL INCREASE OF ITS SELF-PRESERVATION PARAMETERS....
...AND THAT ACCIDENTAL INCREASE IS ALSO MAKING THE ROBOT STRONGER THAN NORMAL.

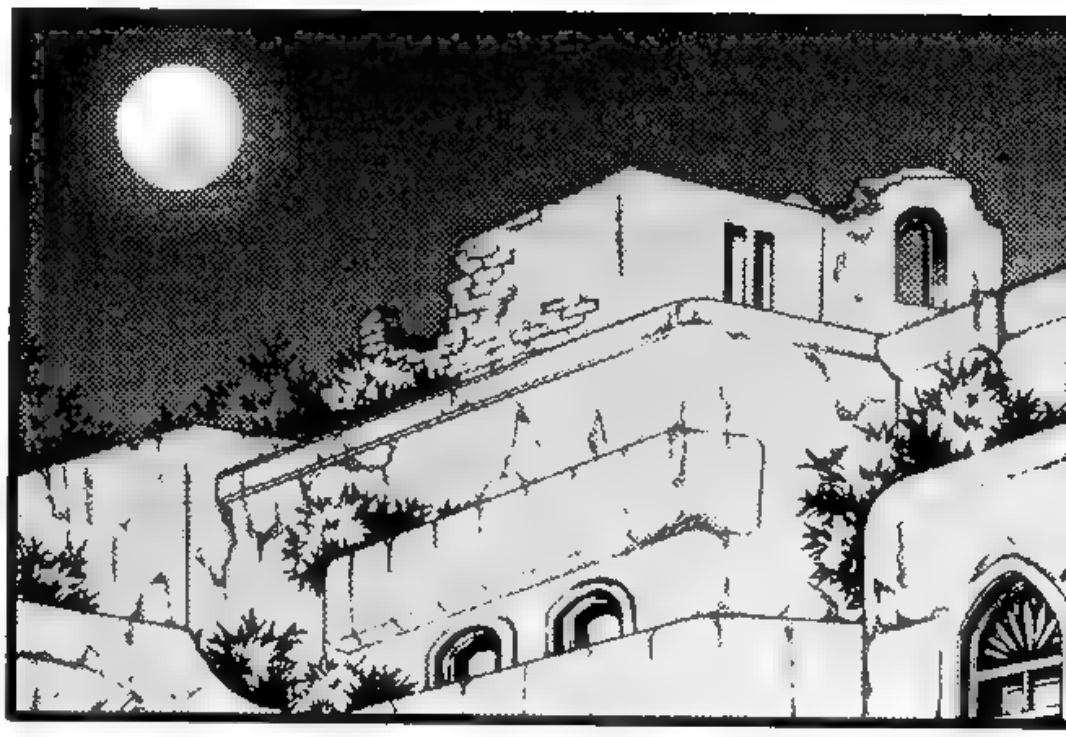
SHIT!
...IS ACTING BY ITS OWN FREE WILL--
FORCED TO ACT THAT WAY?!
THEN, THAT THING...
DON'T THINK ABOUT IT, HONOKA.
YOUR OPPONENT IS A ROBOT FOOT SOLDIER THAT WENT BERSERK...
THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW.

IT WAS AFRAID!

IT WAS YELLING THAT IT DIDN'T WANT TO DIE!

THE TARGET IS GETTING CLOSER.

BE CAREFUL.



HIS VOICE TOUCHES ME. I HEAR HIS YELLING, BUT--!
HONOKA?
WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT ARE YOU HESI-TA--
BE QUIET!
I don't want to die.
EVEN THINGS THAT ARE MANUFAC-TURED... EVEN THEY...
...SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE!
HOW CAN I NOT HESITATE ?!
NOBODY WANTS TO DIE!
EVEN I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
EVEN YOU!

I don't want to die! I don't want to die!
YES. I KNOW.
I'M SCARED, TOO...
...BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
YOU MUST HAVE A STRONG WILL TO LIVE...
...OR YOU COULDN'T SURVIVE IN THIS LAND.
BUT, IF YOU WON'T STOP THIS VIOLENCE...
ONLY ONE OF US WILL SURVIVE.
ONE WILL LIVE AND THE OTHER WILL DIE.
IF ONLY ONE OF US CAN BE THE WINNER...

I ASSURE YOU, IT WILL BE ME!

I MUST...
...DO THIS.

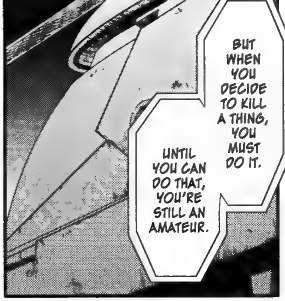
ゴロ

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...

...HONOKA?

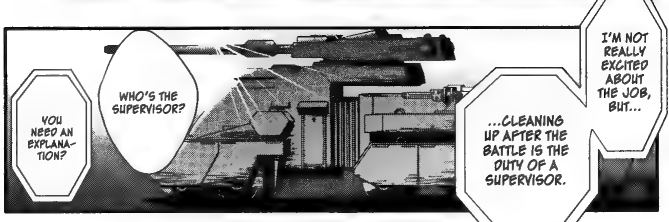
.....
I WAS THINKING MORE ABOUT HIS WORDS...
I DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE PREPARED TO CUT HIM DOWN.
HOW STRANGE IT IS THAT INSIDE EVERYONE, EVEN A ROBOT, IS THE SAME.
I don't want to die.
I don't want to die.
...THAN I WAS ABOUT HIS YELLING.
THEY HAD A STRONGER MESSAGE FOR ME.
SOME PEOPLE MIGHT SAY THAT MACHINE HAD A "SOUL."
STRONGER SOULS SURVIVE.
YOU ARE STRONG, HONOKA.

...I'LL ALWAYS BE AN AMATEUR.
IF I CONTINUE TO HESITATE WHEN I SHOULD ACT...

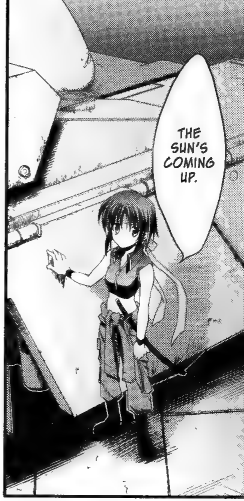

UNTIL YOU CAN DO THAT, YOU'RE STILL AN AMATEUR.
BUT WHEN YOU DECIDE TO KILL A THING, YOU MUST DO IT.

OF COURSE.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE "FIRST-CLASS," AREN'T YOU?

THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I LIKE ABOUT YOU.
YOU THINK OVER YOUR INTENTIONS IN YOUR OWN WAY.


YOU NEED AN EXPLANATION?
WHO'S THE SUPERVISOR?
...CLEANING UP AFTER THE BATTLE IS THE DUTY OF A SUPERVISOR.
I'M NOT REALLY EXCITED ABOUT THE JOB, BUT...

WAIT.
WE'VE FINISHED OUR JOB.
TIME TO GO.


THE SUN'S COMING UP.

WHAT IS IT?
MM... JUST A LITTLE SOME-THING.
LET'S GO HOME, BOGIE.

WORK 04
[Beyond the Taboo]

A FEW CENTURIES AFTER THE GREAT WAR CAUSED THE DESTRUCTION OF CIVILIZATION AND TURNED THE LANDS INTO DESERT...
...HUMANS STILL THRIVE IN THE PLANET-WIDE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT.
IN THE DANGEROUS OUTLANDS REGION, THE ROKUGOU DESERT, THERE IS A WELL-KNOWN DESERT SCOUT...
MISS HONOKA.
...A GIRL WHO IS A PROFESSIONAL DUNE RUNNER.
NO WAY.
PLEASE COME IN. ♡
Mama! Is that big sister afraid of hospitals?
YOU'RE NOT AFRAID, ARE YOU? ♡
ALL RIGHT ALREADY! I JUST NEED TO SEE THE DOCTOR. UNDERSTAND?
バタン!!

I HAVE BAD NEWS FOR YOU. YOU HAVE THE "YOU'LL DIE IF YOU DON'T MAKE YOUR BREASTS BIGGER" DISEASE!

!

THANK YOU, MEI LIN. HAVE HER TAKE A SEAT.

DOC-TOR.

MISS HONOKA IS HERE TO SEE YOU.

YOU DON'T LOOK SO BAD YOURSELF, DOCTOR.

HA HA HA! THE TRUTH IS, YOU SEEM HEALTHY, HONOKA.

HOW IS EVERYTHING AT WORK?

WE MUST PERFORM EMERGENCY SURGERY *IMMEDIA-TELY!*

(3)

I'M GOING HOME.

MEI LIN, PREPARE A BED.

IN THAT CASE, I PRESCRIBE A SHORT VACATION.

I SEE.

WE'RE SO BUSY IT'S *TERRIBLE!!*

I HAVE TO HURRY RIGHT BACK!

I DON'T BELIEVE I'M HEARING THIS!
HE KNOWS THAT WE'RE KEEPING YOU FOR A WHILE, AND THAT HE HAS A HOLE IN THE ASSIGNMENT LIST.
YES, MISS HONOKA. CHANGE INTO THESE.
WH--!
WAIT. REALLY ?!
DIDN'T BOGIE TELL YOU?
YOU SHOULD BE GIVEN A CHECK-UP WHEN YOU HAVE THE CHANCE.
...ESPECIALLY IF YOU FEEL ENTIRELY WELL.
YOU KNOW YOU'RE ALWAYS WANDERING OFF INTO THE DESERT...
RELAX, HONOKA.
WHAT DID THE DOC-TOR TELL YOU?
BOGIE!
I KNOW YOU'RE LISTENING.
I AM GOING INTO HIBERNATION MODE NOW.
Hey!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
He escaped!
SHIT.
SO IT WAS A CONSPIRACY...

I WAS SURPRISED WHEN SHE SUDDENLY DECLARED THAT SHE WAS LEAVING, BUT...
THAR SHE BLOWS! SHE WON'T REST UNLESS YOU STRAP HER DOWN.
IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO HER, WOLKEN WOULD NEVER LET ME HEAR THE END OF IT.
MY GOOD-NESS.
SHE PROBABLY DECIDED ON THE DAY WOLKEN PASSED AWAY.
THE DECISIVE MOMENT CAME SO SUDDENLY.
SHE MUST HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT LEAVING SINCE SHE CAME IN.
...IT WAS PROBABLY JUST HER WAY OF GETTING BACK AT HIM.
DON'T WORRY.
THAT'S WHY WE GIVE HER ALL THIS SPECIAL TREATMENT.
...ISN'T ALL IT TAKES TO BE AN ADULT.
ALTHOUGH LIVING ON YOUR OWN...

UGH.

THIS IS SO BORING.

♪♫

DH...

GRIN

WAH!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WHA--

WHAT DO YOU WANT?!

STOP SPYING ON ME!

I'M HONO-KA!
THERE'S NOT MUCH GOING ON RIGHT NOW...
...SO I HAVE SOME FREE TIME.
Nice to meet you--
I DIDN'T ASK YOUR NAME!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
UGH.
にょーん
.....
DON'T TELL ANYONE, OKAY?
ぐきっ
ぐきっ
WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S CALLED AN AIR-PLANE.
WHOA!
YOU MADE IT YOURSELF? AMAZING!
YOU'RE NOT ANGRY?
HUH? WHY SHOULD I BE?
IT LOOKS COOL.

I LIKE TANKS, TOO, BUT...
...FLYING IS THE BEST!
IT IS, ISN'T IT! HEY, HONOKA, WHAT INTERESTS YOU?
.....
ADULTS GET ANGRY AT ME WHEN THEY SEE IT.
I JUST WANT...
...TO FLY THIS.
.....
THE "TECHNOS TABOO," RIGHT?
.....
THE THIRD DECLARED A PROHIBITION AGAINST TECHNOLOGY.
CERTAIN AREAS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ARE SEVERELY CONTROLLED.
HEAVIER-THAN-AIR FLIGHT IS OF SPECIAL CONCERN TO THE THIRD. RESEARCH INTO FLIGHT, AS WELL AS THE BUILDING AND POSSESSION OF AIRPLANES, HAS BEEN COMPLETELY FORBIDDEN.
THE THIRD KEEP WATCH OVER SUCH THINGS, AND WHEN NECESSARY ORDER THE ARMY TO STEP IN.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THE THIRD HAS IN MIND.
IT ISN'T FAIR TO FORCE US TO FOLLOW LAWS THAT MAKE NO SENSE...
.....
.....
...EVEN IF THEIR REASONS HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE GREAT WAR.
THE THIRD GETS UPSET EVEN WHEN THEY FIND SOMEONE FIDDLING WITH A MODEL.
.....
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE CAN'T FLY EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE THE MEANS TO DO SO.
I'VE NEVER HEARD ANYONE ANSWER THAT QUESTION.

WHAT? YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE UP ALREADY?

SUCH A WONDERFUL THING...

BECAUSE THOSE ARE THE RULES, RIGHT?

BUT, IF I GET THE CHANCE...

I'M NOT A KID ANYMORE. I CAN FOLLOW THE RULES.

...IT'S CHILDISH TO GET UPSET OVER SOMETHING THAT CAN'T BE HELPED.

WELL...

BUT PLEASE DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT MY MODEL, OKAY?

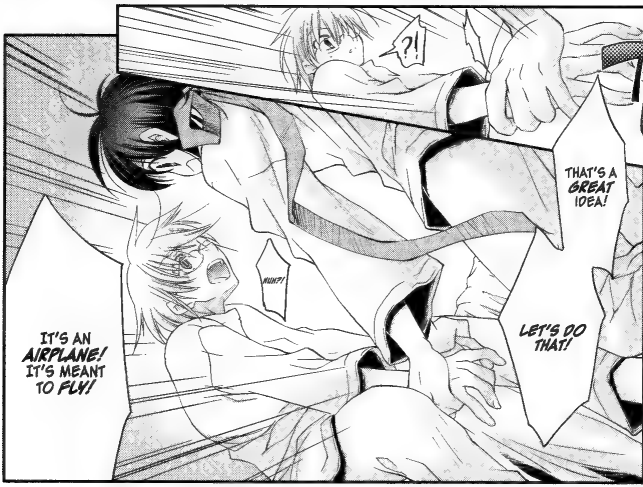
...IT WOULD CAUSE QUITE A RUCKUS.

IF I FLEW MY MODEL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY...

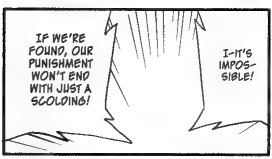
...I WANT TO TRY MY WINGS!

...SOME-DAY...

...IN THE OPEN SKY...


?!
THAT'S A GREAT IDEA!
LET'S DO THAT!
HUH?!
IT'S AN AIRPLANE! IT'S MEANT TO FLY!

DUNE RUNNER HONOKA CAN ACT AS YOUR BODYGUARD AS SHE ESCORTS YOU THROUGH THE DESERT-- IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
THINK OF WHAT I'M OFFERING AS A FREE SERVICE FOR BOYS WHO HAVE DREAMS!
How about it?


I-IT'S IMPOS-SIBLE!
IF WE'RE FOUND, OUR PUNISHMENT WON'T END WITH JUST A SCOLDING!

SO ...
...WE JUST HAVE TO FLY YOUR AIRPLANE WHERE NO ONE ELSE WILL SEE.
H-HOW WOULD WE--

......?
I TOLD YOU BEFORE ...
WE'RE GOING TO THE DESERT
YOU CAN'T GO DRESSED LIKE THAT...
...YOU'LL FREEZE.
?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT TIME IS IT?
NM... WHA! MPW
LET'S GO, OKAY?
HURRY AND CHANGE.
YOU WANT TO GO RIGHT NOW?!
YOU DIDN'T MENTION THAT BEFORE!
QUIETLY!

BOGIE, ARE YOU READY?
.....
ROGER! YOU'RE COMING THROUGH LOUD AND CLEAR.
IT LOOKS AS IF YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MY IRRITATION.
THIS IS HARDLY THE SORT OF OPERATION FOR WHICH YOU SEND AN EMERGENCY MESSAGE.
YES, YES. LET'S TALK ABOUT IT LATER.

I'M NOT READY!
FOR YOU, "SOMEDAY" IS REALLY "NEVER," RIGHT?
NO, NO, YOU'RE WRONG!
THEN LET'S GET A MOVE ON. HURRY UP.

W-WE CAN'T. IF WE'RE DISCOVERED, WE'LL BE IN BIG TROUBLE--
WE'LL BE FINE AS LONG AS WE GET BACK BY SUN-UP.
MY PARTNER IS READY, TOO.
REALLY?
IT SEEMS... ...AS IF WE'RE SKIPPING TOWN.
Isn't it exciting?

I GUESS.
BUT I'M JUST A LITTLE AFRAID. IT SEEMS...
...THAT MY HEART IS POUNDING.

COME ON.
LET'S GET OUTTA HERE.

W-WAIT.

WAIT ALREADY

COME ON, SHAKE A LEG --!

WHOA!

THAT'S...

HIDE!

...THE MILITARY PATROL!

THIS IS BAD...

WHITINE

WHY WOULD THEY SEND ONE TO A PLACE LIKE THIS?

EVEN HERE?

A SENTRY HERE, TOO!

WHOA!

THIS WAY!

...IS SECURITY SO TIGHT?

WHY TODAY OF ALL DAYS...

JEEZ!

I WONDER IF THEY'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.

HONOKA?
WHAT DID YOU DO TO START ALL THIS COMMOTION?
BOGIE!
UMPH
COME ON.
BEFORE WE GET INTO TROUBLE.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
OF COURSE, HONOKA, THIS IS YOUR FAULT

I CAN'T--
I CAN'T DO ANY OF THIS AFTER ALL.
TO THINK MY LITTLE AIRPLANE WOULD BE THE CAUSE OF SUCH BIG TROUBLE!

HUH?
IT'S NO USE.
I CAN'T GO ON.
I WASN'T READY TO FLY MY AIRPLANE AFTER ALL.
I NEED TIME TO GET PERMISSION AND PREPARE MYSELF.
IF YOU DON'T DO IT NOW...
...WHEN WILL IT BE OKAY?
YOU DON'T LIKE TO LEAVE QUESTIONS LIKE THAT UNANSWERED, DO YOU?
IF YOU KEEP HOLDING BACK, YOU'LL NEVER FIND OUT.
THIS IS ONLY A STARTING PLACE.

REMEMBER THAT YOU *STILL HAVE TO LIVE...*

...WHILE THINKING ABOUT "*SOME-DAY.*"

YOU SAID YOURSELF THAT YOU WOULD HAVE TO TAKE A CHANCE SOMEDAY.

WELL, "SOMEDAY" IS TODAY.

YOU CAN'T PUT YOUR DREAMS OFF FOREVER. THEY MUST BE FULFILLED EVENTUALLY.

YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DECIDE WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT.

THERE ARE THINGS...
...YOU WANT TO DO, AREN'T THERE?
...TCH.
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, TALKING ABOUT A GUY AS IF HE'S A COWARD?

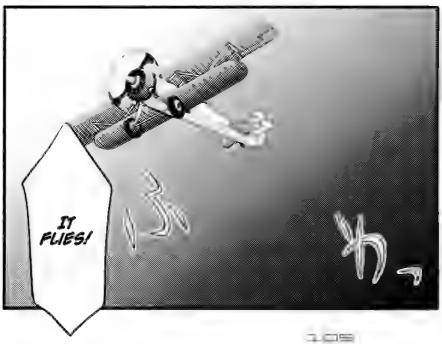
I AM THE ONE WHO WILL DECIDE WHEN TO DO SOMETHING.
I DON'T NEED PERMISSION.
SO...
YOU'D BETTER CATCH ME!

YOU CAN JUMP TO MY ARMS IF YOU TRY!

なでなで
かあ
あ
HONOKA IS...
...ONE PUSHY BROAD.

WHOA! PLENTY OF ROOM HERE!
DON'T TALK ABOUT PEOPLE AS IF THEY'RE CRIMINALS.
MY GOODNESS, I AM AMAZED AT HOW QUICKLY THINGS CAN CHANGE.
TO THINK I WAS AN ACCESSORY TO A KIDNAPPING!

HURRY AND GIVE IT A SHOT!
HEY.


IT FLIES!

YEAH!

WHY ARE YOU SO SURPRISED, HONOKA?

IT CRASHED ...!

...and is a wreck!

Shocked!!

AAIIEE!

SNAP

IF YOU HADN'T BROUGHT ME OUT HERE, HONOKA ...

...I WOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY WITH A PLANE THAT COULDN'T FLY VERY WELL.

NEXT TIME, I'LL BUILD ONE THAT WILL FLY LIKE A BIRD.

...AND ALSO ADJUST THE BALANCE OF THE FUSELAGE.

I NEED TO INCREASE THE AREA OF THE WINGS...

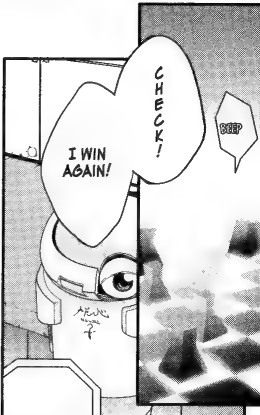
...I CAN IMPROVE IT, TOO.

I CAN NOT ONLY REPAIR IT...

IT BROKE.

THAT'S WHY...
...I DON'T MIND THE AIRPLANE CRASHING.

OH!
BOGIE DOESN'T LIKE TO LOSE, SO BE CAREFUL.
I'M FINE OVER HERE. I'M PRETTY GOOD AT READING.


BEEP
CHECK!
I WIN AGAIN!

BY THE WAY...
...JUST WHAT GAME ARE YOU PLAYING?

HMM. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET SERIOUS.

OH, NOTHING MUCH.
I'M JUST THE YOUNGEST BOY GENIUS IN HISTORY TO WORK IN THE TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH LAB.
Move that piece to D-7.
IF SOMEONE LIKE YOU MESSES WITH A PLANE...
...OF COURSE THEY'D BE WATCHING YOU!
You're loud.
SOMEDAY, WHEN I BUILD A FULL-SIZE AIRPLANE...
...I'LL TAKE YOU ON THE FIRST RIDE...
...OVER THE DESERT.
*Red rice is often a bentou made to a lover or to symbolize a festive occasion.
YOU'RE A FAST WORKER, MISS HONOKA-- GOING ON A DATE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!
HERE. A SPECIAL SNACK PRESCRIBED BY THE HEAD DOCTOR.
Hah!
Red Rice*
HE KNOWS!
And what's with this harassment?!

WORK 05
[Prelude of Sourpuss]

A FEW CENTURIES AFTER THE GREAT WAR CAUSED THE DESTRUCTION OF CIVILIZATION AND TURNED ALL LANDS TO DESERT...
...A DUNE RUNNER, WHO IS A GIRL NAMED...
LISTEN TO THIS, BOGIE...
..."THE MUSIC OF HEAVEN" PLAYED BY...
...HUMANS CONTINUE TO THRIVE IN THIS HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT.
IN A DANGEROUS OUTLANDS REGION CALLED THE ROKUGOU DESERT THERE IS A PROFESSIONAL SCOUT...
...HONOKA.
SHHH!

IT'S GOOD TO LOVE MUSIC, BUT DON'T IGNORE YOUR JOB.

YOU WERE PERSONALLY SELECTED TO TAKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM YOUR USUAL GUARD JOB SO YOU COULD ACT AS HER SPECIAL BODYGUARD.

I KNOW.

A JOB LIKE THAT IS A NICE PERK.

I don't get this sort of chance to shine very often.

...THE GENIUS VIOLINIST, ELLENOR GUTENBERG.

HAVING ONLY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, I DON'T UNDERSTAND "ART," BUT...
...THESE SOUND WAVES LINE UP VERY NICELY.
THAT'S WHAT WE CALL BEAUTIFUL MUSIC.
BUT ...
...SOMEHOW ...
...SHE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE SHE'S HAVING ANY FUN.
Pouts

.....
I'M TIRED.
I'D LIKE TO TAKE A BREAK.
HONOKA, PLEASE PREPARE SOME TEA.
ELLENOR, AS THE MANAGER I SHOULD BE THE ONE...
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
I WANT HONOKA TO DO IT.
I UNDER-STAND.
I SEE WHAT AN IMPORTANT JOB YOU HAVE.
I'M DOING SERVANT'S WORK.
WHY DID YOU CHOOSE ME AS YOUR PERSONAL BODYGUARD?
ARE YOU AFRAID THAT YOU'RE IN DANGER?

....I WANTED TO SEE WHAT KIND OF GIRL WOULD DO THAT.
THAT'S ALL.
NOT REALLY.
I HEARD ABOUT YOU, A GIRL ON SENTRY DUTY, AND...
UH-UM...
IT SEEMS THAT MISS HONOKA IS A DUNE RUNNER.
WHY? DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
.....
CAN YOU TELL US SOME OF YOUR ADVENTURES?
I UNDERSTAND THAT SHE IS THE SAME AGE AS YOU.
REMARKABLE FOR ONE SO YOUNG!

ALTHOUGH TO MOST PEOPLE MY WORK SEEMS DULL...
...I LOVE IT, JUST AS I LOVE THIS TOWN AND THE DESERT AROUND IT.
HMM...
I DO EVERYTHING FROM FINDING CATS TO GUIDING PARTIES THROUGH THE DESERT.
YEAH, PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING THAT PAYS.
THE PEOPLE WHO PASS THROUGH HERE AND...
...THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE--
I ENJOY HELPING THEM.
.....
DOING MY WORK IS THE SAME AS ELLENOR PLAYING HER VIOLIN.

IT'S NOT SOMETHING EVERYONE CAN DO.
I THINK THAT MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY IS A VERY WONDERFUL TALENT.
YOU ARE FORTUNATE THAT BY DOING SOMETHING YOU ENJOY...
...YOU CAN MAKE A LOT OF PEOPLE HAPPY.
IN ORDER TO BECOME A FIRST-CLASS DUNE RUNNER AS FAST AS I CAN...
...I HAVE TO WORK HARD AT IT, JUST AS ELLENOR WORKS HARD AT HER MUSIC.
I DO...

...NOT PLAY BECAUSE I LOVE IT OR HATE IT!

DON'T PRETEND THAT YOU UNDER-STAND!

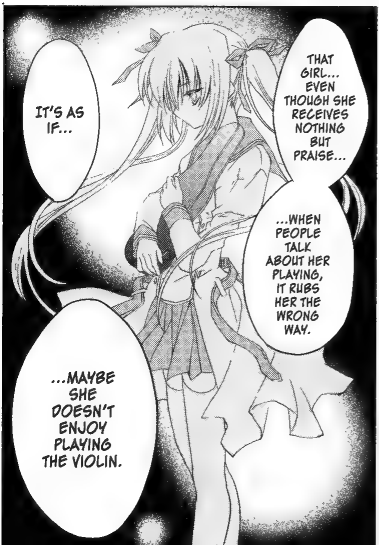
...HOW I FEEL--

HONOKA, YOU WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND ...

ELLENOR! WAIT!

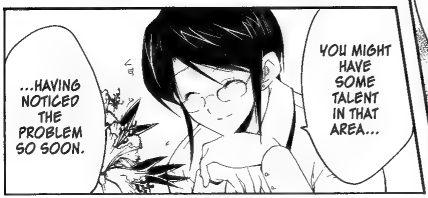
IF YOU'RE GOING TO LECTURE SOMEONE, TALK TO THAT NASTY GIRL!
SHE IS VERY RUDE!
HUH?
AH.
Sigh
WHAT DID I SAY?
TOMORROW'S CONCERT IS CANCELLED!

I'M SORRY, MISS HONOKA.
SHE NEEDS TO LEARN SOME MANNERS. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.


THAT GIRL... EVEN THOUGH SHE RECEIVES NOTHING BUT PRAISE...
IT'S AS IF...
...WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT HER PLAYING, IT RUBS HER THE WRONG WAY.
...MAYBE SHE DOESN'T ENJOY PLAYING THE VIOLIN.

I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT MUSIC.
AH!
NO!
It only seemed that way!
BUT I'VE HEARD THAT A LOT OF ARTISTS ARE HARD TO HANDLE!

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, IT DID SEEM...
...THAT HER NOTES SOUNDED A LITTLE HARSH.


YOU MIGHT HAVE SOME TALENT IN THAT AREA...
...HAVING NOTICED THE PROBLEM SO SOON.

A really expensive instrument?!
AH!
IT'S A UNIQUE VIOLIN?!
WELL, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

...HER SPECIAL PROBLEM ...
...IS WITH HER UNUSUAL VIOLIN.
SHE ACTS AS IF SHE'S A ROBOT. AND IT MAY BE UNIMPORTANT, BUT...
IT'S TRUE.
HER ACTIONS ARE PREDICT-ABLE-- ALL BY THE BOOK.

IN ANY CASE, WE CAN'T LET HER WALK AROUND ALONE.
MISS HONOKA, PLEASE FIND HER.
EVEN THOUGH SHE ASKED ME NOT TO~~
That brat!
OH, NO.
Sigh——……
I DID IT AGAIN.

!!

HI

WOULD YOU LIKE AN ICE CREAM CONE?

WAAAA!!

IF I RUN AWAY, I DON'T HAVE ANY-WHERE TO GO!

I am so stupid.

YOUNG LADY!

THE RULE IS THAT YOU CAN HAVE ONLY ONE ICE CREAM CONE PER DAY...

...because if you eat more, you'll get a stomachache.

THEN I HAVE A PROBLEM.

HMPH.

NO, THANK YOU.

.....

...I GUESS I COULD TAKE ONE OFF YOUR HANDS.

I ABSO-LUTELY DO.

IF...

...IF YOU ABSOLUTELY NEED SOME HELP...

HERE YOU GO.

I GUESS IT CAN'T BE HELPED!

.....

!

?

SINCE WE'RE ALREADY OUT...

...WHY DON'T WE TAKE A WALK?

ISN'T YOUR VIOLIN HEAVY?
MAY I CARRY I FOR YOU?
OH.
SORRY.
Oh, no!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO...
STOP!!
DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH MY INSTRUMENT WITHOUT MY PERMISSION!
OH!
UM...I'M SORRY.
THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM...
FOR JUST NOW...
...AND FOR SUDDENLY RUNNING OUT EARLIER.

IT'S AS IF THEY THINK I'M SOME SORT OF VIOLIN-PLAYING ROBOT THAT CAN'T DO ANYTHING ELSE.

I...

...I DON'T ENJOY BEING PUT ON A PEDESTAL AS A GENIUS.

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO MY PARENTS WERE.

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, THIS VIOLIN WAS THE ONLY THING AT THE ORPHANAGE THAT WAS REALLY MINE.

PLAYING ON THE VIOLIN WAS MY ONLY COMFORT.

THE ONLY WAY I COULD STAY SANE WAS TO PRACTICE CONSTANTLY EVERYDAY.

MY PLAYING HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH LIKING IT OR DISLIKING IT.

I HAD NO OTHER CHOICE.

THAT'S WHY...

...I MUST BE *THE BEST* OR *NOTHING!*

PLAYING THE VIOLIN IS THE ONLY THING THAT KEEPS ME GOING.

I'VE HAD EXPERIENCES SIMILAR TO YOURS.

WAIT A MOMENT.

WOULDN'T YOU FEEL BETTER IF YOU WEREN'T SO TENSE?

I GUESS YOU'LL BE ANGRY AT ME FOR SAYING THAT. HA HA!

...JUST AS YOU HAVE, ELLENOR.

...I RISKED EVERYTHING THAT MADE ME WHO I AM...

IN ORDER TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE CROWD...

!.....

YOU TELL ME TO BE MYSELF...

YOU'LL ENJOY LIFE MORE IF YOU JUST BE YOURSELF.

...SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM!
THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES MY LIFE WORTH LIVING IS...
...MY ABILITY TO PLAY THE VIOLIN.
MY PROBLEM IS SO SIMPLE...
...IT'S NOT EVEN FUNNY.
COME WITH ME, ELLENOR.

I DON'T WANT --

WHA...

HONOKA!

CAN WE PLAY?

HEY, YOU GUYS!

WHY NOT GIVE IT A CHANCE?

YOU MIGHT EVEN ENJOY YOURSELF!

!

SO, YOU CAN LAUGH AFTER ALL.

BUT I CAN'T...

よよっ

...IT'S--

IT'S NOT REALLY ME!

Ha ha!

DON'T WORRY, YOU'RE DOING FINE.

HURRY!

I KNOW --!

HEY! KICK THE BALL OVER HERE!

MY VIOLIN!!

!!

ELLENOR?!

!

KYAAAH!
TAKE IT EASY!
ELE--
OH NO!
AAH!
MY VIOLIN!
AAH ...!
AAH ...!
ELLENOR!!

I'LL GET IT BACK FOR YOU!
WAIT HERE!
PLEASE BE CAREFUL, HONOKA!
IF I LOSE MY VIOLIN, I--
STOP...!
THIEF!
DROP THAT CASE!

YOU!

STOP!

AH!

I SAID DROP IT!

ELLENOR!

I GOT IT BACK --

ELLENOR?!

WORK 06
[Concert of Loneliness]

THE THIRD...

...A RACE THAT WATCHES OVER HUMANS USING THEIR BIG RED EYE.

HAVE YOU NEVER FELT THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH THIS WORLD?

WHAT'S GOING ON?

ELLENOR...

WHO ...

...ARE YOU?!

WE'RE BEING CONTROLLED.

...THEY COULD EASILY WIPE OUT NORMAL HUMANS.

IF *THEY* FELT LIKE IT...

I WANT YOU TO LEND US YOUR POWER.

TO BE WITHOUT MY VIOLIN FOR THIS LONG...
IT'S THE FIRST TIME ...

...BECAUSE IT IS MY ONE AND ONLY FRIEND.

LISTEN...

I LEARNED TO PLAY THE VIOLIN THIS WELL...

BECAUSE THE VIOLIN IS MY BETTER HALF.
WITHOUT IT...
...I AM NOTHING.
I WAS PROBABLY HOLDING IT WHEN I WAS BORN.
THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO BE ITS GREATEST VIRTUOSO.
I CAN'T EVER BE SEPARATED FROM MY INSTRUMENT.

I AM SO SORRY!

ELLENOR BELIEVED IN ME, BUT I COULDN'T PROTECT HER.

HOW CAN I CALL MYSELF A BODYGUARD? I'M SUCH A FAILURE!

SQUEEZE

AT LEAST THE VIOLIN IS SAFE...

THAT'S SOMETHING, ANYWAY.

ELLENOR, PLEASE BE SAFE!

I WAS WITH HER, BUT--

IT LOOKS AS IF WHAT THE KIDNAPPERS REALLY WANT IS THE VIOLIN.
IT SAID THAT I SHOULD MEET THEM AT THE NEW CITY WHERE THEY WOULD EXCHANGE ELLENOR FOR HER INSTRUMENT.
...I JUST RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM THE KIDNAPPERS.
ACTUALLY ...

THERE IS NO NEED.
I WILL RESCUE ELLENOR --
I WILL GO!
!

THE. KIDNAPPERS. WANT. THE. VIOLIN.
DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID?

THE SYMPATHETIC FREQUENCY OF THAT VIOLIN VARIES, DEPENDING ON THE PERSON WHO PLAYS IT.

"SYMPATHETIC VIBRATION," THAT'S THE KEY. EVERYTHING VIBRATES AT ITS OWN PARTICULAR FREQUENCY.

IF YOU GENERATE THE SYMPATHETIC FREQUENCY OF AN OBJECT, A VIBRATION GROWS WITHIN IT AND WILL EVENTUALLY DESTROY IT.

THE VIOLIN CAN ALSO BECOME A TERRIBLE WEAPON, DEPENDING ON WHO PLAYS IT.

TECHNOS TABOO.*

IT'S NOT IMPORTANT WHEN OR WHERE THE VIOLIN WAS MADE.
I GUARD IT TO PROTECT IT FROM THE THIRD.
THAT IS MY OTHER JOB.
I LIVE ONLY TO PLAY THE VIOLIN.
WHAT—!!
WE CAN FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO PLAY IT, BUT...
...THAT VIOLIN IS ONE OF A KIND.

IS THAT ALL YOU CAN SAY?
ARE YOU PLANNING TO GO AGAINST THE WISHES OF YOUR CLIENT?!
I WAS HIRED PERSONALLY BY ELLENOR! SHE IS MY CLIENT!
MISS HONOKA!

I AM PLANNING TO GO SAVE HER!
AND, IF I MAY ASK, WHAT IS YOUR PLAN?
I WILL DELIVER THE VIOLIN TO ELLENOR.
NO MATTER WHY, THIS VIOLIN IS HERS.
THE ONE WHO DECIDES WHAT TO DO WITH IT...
...MUST BE ELLENOR.

THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT IS GROWING STRONGER IN THE NEW CITY.
EVEN AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE THE DIVINE THIRD EYE, AMONG THE THIRD ITSELF...
...SOME MEMBERS ARE BEGINNING TO DOUBT THE THIRD'S MORALITY.
THEY BELIEVE THAT THE THIRD IS USING ITS TECHNOLOGY RESTRICTIONS TO CONTROL THE COMMON PEOPLE.
THOSE VILLAINS IN THE NEW CITY ARE PROBABLY RESPONSIBLE.

I WONDER WHERE THEY HEARD ABOUT THE VIOLIN.
WHEN YOU'RE IN THIS SORT OF MOOD, I HAVE TO MOVE FAST TO PREVENT YOU FROM GETTING INTO TROUBLE.
THAT WAS A QUICK THEORY.
ELLENOR IS OVERLY PROTECTED FROM THE WORLD.

THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO TELL HER WHAT'S GOING ON.
OR ANYTHING ELSE I DO IS POINTLESS.
SHE MUST BE TOLD THAT SHE IS NOT ALONE.

AND I KNOW WHY. TO THEM, THE VIOLIN IS MORE VALUABLE THAN I AM.

NO ONE WILL COME TO RESCUE ME.

BUT THOSE PEOPLE ARE—

THE NEW CITY

THERE YOU ARE!

HONOKA?!

KA-CHANK

YOU CAME TO RESCUE ME?
OF COURSE.
ALSO, TO DELIVER THIS.
MY VIOLIN!
BECAUSE IT IS THE THING MOST VALUABLE TO ELLENOR.
COME ON.
LET'S GO BEFORE ANYBODY NOTICES YOU'RE MISSING.
.....
I CAN'T GO.

"THE THING THEY VALUE MOST IS THE VIOLIN."
ELEANOR...?
"BUT WE NEED YOU MORE THAN WE NEED THE VIOLIN."
THOSE PEOPLE WHO FIGHT THE THIRD TOLD ME...
"THE THIRD, THE ONES WITH THE DIVINE RED EYE, ARE SABOTAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITY."
...THAT THIS WORLD HAS MANY PROBLEMS, AND ON TOP OF THAT...
...THEY SAID THAT THEY NEEDED ME...
ME!
...EVEN WITHOUT THE VIOLIN!

MY TROUBLES ARE ALL THE FAULT OF THIS CULTURE...

OF THIS WARPED CULTURE THAT THE THIRD HAS CREATED!

ELLENOR! GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF!

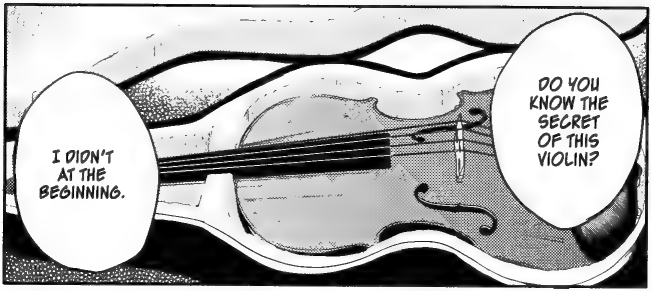
I TRADED YOU FOR THE VIOLIN.

THEY DON'T WANT *YOU*, ELLENOR!

WE HAVE TO ESCAPE BEFORE THEY KNOW YOU'RE GONE.

!.....

ELLENOR...?
EVEN YOU TREAT ME LIKE A GAME PIECE, HONOKA.


DO YOU KNOW THE SECRET OF THIS VIOLIN?
I DIDN'T AT THE BEGINNING.

I THOUGHT PEOPLE WOULD NOTICE ME...

I PRACTICED REALLY HARD.

I PUT IN A LOT OF EFFORT.

NOTHING I DID REALLY MATTERED.

...IF I COULD PLAY BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE.

BUT...

JUST...

...DESTROYING THE VIOLIN SHOULD HAVE BEEN MY ONLY CONCERN.

I'M ALONE IN THE WORLD, ANYWAY!
I SHOULD JUST SMASH EVERYTHING!
SO THIS IS THE VIOLIN'S "SPECIAL POWER," HUH?
ELLENOR!! TAKE IT EASY--

?!

Even my violin doesn't need me...

Even my self-esteem is gone.

I AM THINKING ELLENOR'S THOUGHTS, FEELING HER FEELINGS!

OW!

No one...

... understands how I feel.

I don't want to be alone anymore.
ELLENOR!
PLEASE, HONOKA! YOU'RE SUCH A FREE SPIRIT...
Help me!
MY FEELINGS THAT I'M A FAILURE...
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!
Honoka!

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

...NO MATTER WHAT THE CONDITIONS OF YOUR BIRTH WERE.

FSHH

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU MAINTAIN YOUR SELF-RESPECT...

DEPENDING ON SOME-ONE ELSE IS NO CRIME.

...IS YOU YOURSELF.

AFTER THAT, THE ONE WHO MUST DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE...

A DIVINE BLUE EYE...

HONOKA...?

YOU'RE *NOT ALONE* IN THIS WORLD.

THERE'S NO NEED TO SAY SUCH SAD THINGS.

I HAVE...

...DECIDED TO START A NEW LIFE.

ELLENOR.

I WANT TO SEE A PERFORMANCE WHERE YOU ARE SMILING.

They deserved whatever they got.

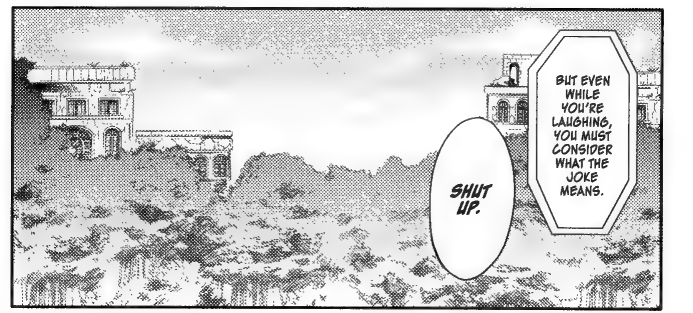
TOO BAD FOR ELLENOR'S ENEMIES.

IT LOOKS AS IF THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD WATCH CAUGHT ELLENOR'S KIDNAPPERS.

IT SEEMS THEY WERE BLAMED FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING WHERE SHE WAS BEING HELD.

THE BLUE EYE IS DIFFERENT FROM THE USUAL DIVINE RED EYE, SO...
...I GUESS I'M NOT ONE OF THE THIRD.

HONOKA...
...UM...
...THAT FOREHEAD?
WHO KNOWS?



To be continued

THE THIRD
Apprentice Girl on the Desert Planet

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KATSUAKI TANAKA

SPECIAL THANKS
FUDIMARUARIKUI

DESIGN
YOSHIAKI TSUBAKIYAMA
(HONA GRAPHIC)

THE THIRD
Apprentice Girl on the Desert Planet

SURPLUS!

After Honoka, my favorite character in the world of The Third is Master Pai-fuu. Unfortunately she doesn't appear in the manga.

One of the supporting characters, the nurse Mei Lin-chan, is actually a robot with artificial intelligence. I didn't have the time to explain about her...Sob. The truth is, she's older than Bogie!

Thanks for joining me! I look forward to seeing you in the next volume!

2005 Aruki Ito

Chapter 6
Chapter 1
My...
Hold --!
My breasts --!
wait --!
UWAAAH!
There are some mysterious backward things in the world...
It can also be called a masochistic gag.